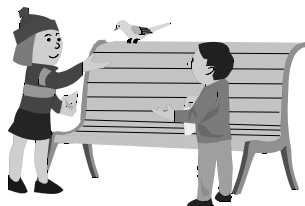


Natural Consequences – Natural consequences help children learn to take responsibility for their actions. For instance, the ten-year-old who forgot to bring home her social studies book and is unprepared for the quiz may want you to write a note that she was sick. Refusing to do this teaches the child to plan better the next time and not to expect her parents to bail her out.

A Few Things To Consider

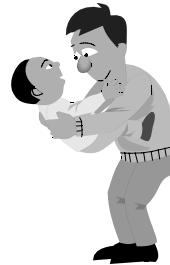
No more “no” – Saying “no” all the time makes the word lose its meaning. Try giving directions in a positive manner. For instance, if your child is coloring on the wall, you might say, “Walls aren’t meant for drawing, but paper is perfect. Here’s some special paper just for you and when you finish your picture, we’ll put it on the refrigerator.” Catch children when they are sharing, helping other children or dealing well with frustration and compliment them immediately.

Prevention – With time, parents get to know their children’s trouble spots and then can plan ahead to avoid them. For example, if your child is especially fussy in the late afternoon, after work or school is not a good time to take her to the grocery store. If you must stop on the way home, try packing a snack or toy or enlist her help in finding the items you need.



A Basic Principle of Discipline

One basic principle of discipline can never be stated enough. At any age, parents should separate the person and the action. It is very important to remind the child that it is the behavior that is disliked but the child is still loved.



Discipline—

Helping Children Develop Self-Control



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Virginia Coalition for
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The Goal of Discipline Is To Help Children Develop Self-Control. . .

Parents expect children to misbehave and therefore they are prepared to teach appropriate behavior through discipline. However, the goal of discipline is to help children develop self-control, not to have them merely obey adult commands.

The foundations for discipline and self-control are built in the early years as parents develop a loving and trusting relationship with their baby. But, sometime between the ages of 1 and 2, the baby becomes a full-fledged person with the need to explore independence. At this point, the child must be helped to understand what is safe and what he can and cannot do.

At first, toddlers may not be developmentally ready to control their actions. They may appear to understand the rules, but they do not understand the idea of consequences. A gentle, but firm, "no," and perhaps removing the child from the situation will help. Even so, an overtired or overwhelmed, frustrated child may break down into a tantrum.



Self-control is a process that develops slowly and parents must be flexible as the child's age and abilities change. Here are some things to think about in disciplining children:

A child communicates through behavior – Discipline is necessary to keep children out of danger. Through discipline, they learn how to behave, to respect the rights of others and to follow rules. Experts remind us that a child's behavior is a form of communication that needs to be interpreted and understood. The child may be saying, "That's too difficult for me – I'm afraid of being rejected – I want you to play with me – I want you to pay attention to me – " or other messages about what the child wants or how he feels.

Use language to help solve problems– Establish fair and simple rules and state them clearly. Help children learn to use words, rather than actions, to express their feelings. When you are disciplining the child, let her know that you understand how she is feeling – "I know you feel upset when your brother takes your things without asking, but we don't hit."

Negotiate – Negotiation makes everyone feel like they are part of the solution to a problem. Even the youngest children like to feel that they have a choice, rather than that they are being forced into something. However, only give the child a choice when he really has one. Don't ask a 4-year-old if he wants to go to the doctor if a visit to the doctor is necessary, but you can ask him what snack he would like to take or what he wants to wear.



Pick your battles – Some issues aren't worth fighting over. Destroying a toy on purpose is more serious than dawdling in the bathtub.

Honesty is more important than cleaning up a room. For teens, especially, it is important to set a curfew, but it is probably not worth fighting about what clothes they wear as long as they fit your rules of decency.

Consider These Discipline Methods

Time out – Time out fulfills two important objectives: it immediately stops unwanted behavior and it gives both child and parent a necessary cooling-off period. The number of minutes the child is in time out should be generally equivalent to his age.

Ignoring the bad behavior and focusing on the good – If a child misbehaves as a way of getting attention, then ignoring the behavior may make it disappear. Repeatedly telling the child to stop blowing bubbles into his milk may call attention to the behavior and make it into an event. Ignore it and focus on something else, but be sure to give the child your attention when he does the right thing.

Rewards – Don't think of a reward as a bribe, but rather as a way to show a child that she is doing a good job. The reward should be tailored to the age and tastes of the child, as well as the resources of the parent. Don't underestimate the value of extra time with you as a reward. Most children crave attention from their parents and will work to get it.

